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SUBJECT: GOB PLANS TO COMBAT SMALL ARMS PROLIFERATION

1. SUMMARY: The Government of Botswana has adopted a three-year national action plan to combat proliferation of small arms but intends to approach G-8 nations, and specifically the United States, to request financial assistance to meet its USD 2 million budget. Subsequent to its participation in numerous international and regional events on this topic, the GOB collaborated with South African NGO SaferAfrica to conduct an assessment of the proliferation of small arms in Botswana. A national plan arose from that assessment. In a June 27 meeting, the GOB and SaferAfrica briefed representatives from the US, UK, German, French and Russian missions on the plan and the Government's intention to formally request financial assistance in implementing. END SUMMARY

GOB PLANS ACTION AGAINST SMALL ARMS TRAFFICKING

2. In a June 27 meeting attended by International Law Enforcement Academy (Gaborone) Director Seymour Jones, Riccardo DeCaris, representing SaferAfrica, outlined Botswana's National Plan for Arms Management and Disarmament. SaferAfrica had worked with Botswana's National Focal Point (NFP), which includes Government agencies such as the police service, the military, the MFA, the Office of the President as well as several NGOs, to develop this document. The plan describes 18 objectives and the specific tasks required to achieve them over a three-year period. Meeting these objectives would further develop the government's institutional capacity, assist in the formulation of policy and legislation, promote public awareness, improve management of the national stockpile of small arms, increase regional and international cooperation, enhance border controls, and support further research on this problem.

GOB LOOKING FOR FUNDING TO IMPLEMENT PLAN

3. The National Plan describes in detail a required budget of USD 2,017,000 -- USD 716,355 in year one, USD 621,700 in year two and USD 678,000 in year three. So far, however, the Government lacks the resources to implement this plan. Consequently, it invited representatives of the G-8 countries to a June 27 briefing to make them aware of the plan and of the GOB's intention to formally request their financial assistance in making it a reality.

4. Although the plan anticipates that 2004-2005 would be year one, implementation has not yet begun. The GOB did, however, finish on July 5 a series of training workshops for members of multi-sectoral district-level task teams on small arms. The NFP anticipates that these teams will promote popular awareness of small arms proliferation and provide education on firearms safety.

BACKGROUND

5. Botswana is a party to 1) the SADC Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and other related materials; 2) the Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons; 3) the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects; and 4) the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts, Components, and Ammunition, supplementing the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime.

6. Pursuant to these commitments, the GOB established the NFP on small arms and convened the First National Consultative Conference on Firearm Control, Ownership and Administration in Botswana May 13-15, 2003. That conference recommended that the Government and civil society work together to produce a national plan of action. It also called for the expansion of the NFP to include civil society representatives, the review of the Firearms and Ammunition Act, and the creation of a forum for discussion of this issue among civil society organizations.

7. Before drafting the National Action Plan, the NFP consulted with SaferAfrica and collaborated on an assessment of the problem of light arms proliferation in Botswana. This involved workshops with law enforcement personnel and

with members of civil society and a popular attitudes survey conducted in October and November 2003. The information and recommendations derived from this process informed the drafting the National Action Plan, which the GOB formally launched on August 2, 2004.

COMMENT

18. The GOB has shown commendable vision in proactively seeking to prevent the proliferation of small arms so rampant in some of its neighbors from spreading to Botswana. Mission believes that assisting the GOB to fund its implementation of this plan would valuably enhance our law enforcement engagement with the GOB and significantly promote regional stability.

HUGGINS